IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1 and 2 and add new claims 3-22 as follows.

Claim 1 (Currently Amended) A rearing simulation apparatus, comprising:

state parameter processing means A for increasing and decreasing a state parameter based on variables fluctuating chronometrically in connection with the state parameter representative of a state of a virtual living thing and variables fluctuating in operation properties in connection with said state parameter responsive to an operation by a player in response to an operation request from the virtual living thing, state parameter processing means A further carrying out "care" and "character" parameter processing which increases and decreases a "care" parameter representative of a degree of "care" with respect to the virtual living thing according to completeness of an operation by a player in response to an operation request from the virtual living thing and increases and decreases "character" parameter influencing requirements for an operation request from the virtual living thing based on said "care" parameter and a "basic value of a category" set peculiar to the category of the virtual living thing at every rearing stage,

operation request processing means B for carrying out the operation request from the virtual living thing in predetermined items when said state parameters meet predetermined requirements for the operation request which are influenced by the "character" parameter,

operation request display means C for displaying the operation request from the virtual living thing in the predetermined items for a the player,

rearing stage processing means D for metamorphosing the virtual living thing to a next rearing stage based on metamorphosis requirements depending on the state parameters, when a category promoting age representative of a period of life set peculiarly to the category of the virtual living thing at every rearing stage has elapsed, said

metamorphosis requirements being connected with the category at the present rearing stage, and

rearing state display means E for displaying said state parameter or said category ~~which is designated by a request operation for displaying the rearing state in response to the request operation for displaying the rearing state~~.

Claim 2. (Currently Amended) A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said state parameter processing means A comprises state parameter processing means further including "care" and "character" parameter processing which increases and decreases a "care" parameter representative of a degree of "care" with respect to the virtual living thing according to the completeness of an operation responsive to a request by ~~a~~ the player, and increasing and decreasing a "character" parameter influencing the requirements for the operation request of the virtual living thing based on said "care" parameter and a "basic value of a category" ~~et~~ set peculiarly to the category of the virtual living thing at every rearing stage, and operation request processing means B comprises operation request processing means which carries out an operation request in the predetermined items when said state ~~parameter~~ parameters meet the predetermined requirements for the operation request influenced by the "character" parameter.

Claim 3 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said state parameter processing means A calculates a "metamorphosis" parameter influencing the metamorphosis requirements based on the "care" parameter; and

said rearing stage processing means D comprises selecting means for selecting one category out of a plurality of categories applicable to a subsequent rearing stage with a basis in said "metamorphosis" parameter.

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Claim 4 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said rearing stage processing means D selects one category out of a plurality of categories associated with a next rearing stage based on the metamorphosis requirements depending on the state parameters, which metamorphosis requirements characterize the selected category in the next rearing stage.

Claim 5 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising living thing data transmitting and receiving means G for transmitting and receiving, via a communication network, data on a virtual living thing, including data representative of the state parameters as well as data representative of the category of a virtual living thing, which is further converted at another rearing simulation apparatus on the communication network to the data on a virtual living thing representative of another category of the virtual living thing and sent back to said living thing data transmitting and receiving means G.

Claim 6. (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said data on a virtual living thing includes user identification data for identifying a user's apparatus, table identification data for identifying a rearing stage table and an address of the rearing stage table for identifying the category of the virtual living thing.

Claim 7 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

said state parameter processing means A increases and decreases the "care" parameter representative of a degree of "care" with respect to the virtual living thing according to completeness of an operation by a player in response to an operation request from the virtual living thing, and calculates based on the "care" parameter a

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metamorphosis parameter influencing metamorphosis requirements to metamorphose the virtual living thing; and

rearing stage processing means D causes the virtual living thing to metamorphose to a next rearing stage based on the metamorphosis requirements depending on the metamorphosis parameter and a metamorphosis reference value set peculiarly to a category of a present rearing stage.

Claim 8 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

rearing stage processing means D selects a veiled category out of a plurality of categories lodged in the next rearing stage to promote the virtual living thing to the next rearing stage, when state parameters meet requirements for a veiled rearing stage, the requirements for the veiled rearing stage being met less often in comparison with the metamorphosis requirements.

Claim 9 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus, comprising:

state parameter processing means A for increasing and decreasing a state parameter based on variables that vary according to a state of a virtual living thing and that vary according to degree of care of a player in response to an operation request of the virtual living thing, for increasing and decreasing a "care" parameter representing a degree of completeness of care by a player in response to the virtual living thing's request, and for increasing and decreasing a "character" parameter, the character parameter is increased or decreased based on the "care" parameter that represents the degree of completeness of care of the player,

operation request processing means B generating the virtual living thing's operation request based on the "character" parameter,

operation request display means C for displaying the operation request items of the virtual living thing,

rearing stage processing means D for metamorphosing the virtual living thing to a next rearing stage based on metamorphosis requirements which depend on the state parameters, and

rearing stage display means E for displaying the state parameter or rearing stage.

Claim 10 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said state parameter processing means A calculates a "metamorphosis" parameter influencing the metamorphosis requirements based on the "care" parameter; and

said rearing stage processing means D comprises selecting means for selecting one category out of a plurality of categories applicable to a subsequent rearing stage with a basis in said "metamorphosis" parameter.

Claim 11 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said rearing stage processing means D selects one category out of a plurality of categories associated with a next rearing stage based on the metamorphosis requirements depending on the state parameters, which metamorphosis requirements characterize the selected category in the next rearing stage.

Claim 12 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 9, further comprising living thing data transmitting and receiving means G for transmitting and receiving, via a communication network, data on a virtual living thing, including data representative of the state parameters as well as data representative of the category of a virtual living thing, which is further converted at another rearing simulation apparatus on the communication network to the data on a virtual living thing representative of another category of the

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virtual living thing and sent back to said living thing data transmitting and receiving means G.

Claim 13. (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said data on a virtual living thing includes user identification data for identifying a user's apparatus, table identification data for identifying a rearing stage table and an address of the rearing stage table for identifying the category of the virtual living thing.

Claim 14 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 9, wherein

said state parameter processing means A increases and decreases the "care" parameter representative of a degree of "care" with respect to the virtual living thing according to completeness of an operation by a player in response to an operation request from the virtual living thing, and calculates based on the "care" parameter a metamorphosis parameter influencing metamorphosis requirements to metamorphose the virtual living thing; and

rearing stage processing means D causes the virtual living thing to metamorphose to a next rearing stage based on the metamorphosis requirements depending on the metamorphosis parameter and a metamorphosis reference value set peculiarly to a category of a present rearing stage.

Claim 15 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 9, wherein

rearing stage processing means D selects a veiled category out of a plurality of categories lodged in the next rearing stage to promote the virtual living thing to the next rearing stage, when state parameters meet requirements for a veiled rearing stage, the requirements for the veiled rearing stage being met less often in comparison with the metamorphosis requirements.

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Claim 16 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus, comprising:

state parameter processing means A for increasing and decreasing a state parameter based on variables fluctuating chronometrically in connection with the state parameter representative of a state of a virtual living thing and variables fluctuating in operation properties in connection with said state parameter responsive to an operation by a player in response to an operation request from the virtual living thing, state parameter processing means A further carrying out "care" and "character" parameter processing which increases and decreases a "care" parameter representative of a degree of "care" with respect to the virtual living thing according to completeness of an operation by a player in response to an operation request from the virtual living thing and increases and decreases "character" parameter influencing requirements for an operation request from the virtual living thing based on said "care " parameter and a "basic value of a category" set peculiar to the category of the virtual living thing at every rearing stage,

operation request processing means B for carrying out the operation request from the virtual living thing in predetermined items when said state parameters meet predetermined requirements for the operation request which are influenced by the "character" parameter,

operation request display means C for displaying the operation request from the virtual living thing in the predetermined items for the player,

rearing stage processing means D for metamorphosing the virtual living thing to a next rearing stage based on metamorphosis requirements depending on the state parameters, when a category promoting age representative of a period of life set peculiarly to the category of the virtual living thing at every rearing stage has elapsed, said metamorphosis requirements being connected with the category at the present rearing stage, and

rearing state display means E for displaying said state parameter or said category.

Claim 17 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said state parameter processing means A calculates a "metamorphosis" parameter influencing the metamorphosis requirements based on the "care" parameter; and

said rearing stage processing means D comprises selecting means for selecting one category out of a plurality of categories applicable to a subsequent rearing stage with a basis in said "metamorphosis" parameter.

Claim 18 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said rearing stage processing means D selects one category out of a plurality of categories associated with a next rearing stage based on the metamorphosis requirements depending on the state parameters, which metamorphosis requirements characterize the selected category in the next rearing stage.

Claim 19 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 16, further comprising living thing data transmitting and receiving means G for transmitting and receiving, via a communication network, data on a virtual living thing, including data representative of the state parameters as well as data representative of the category of a virtual living thing, which is further converted at another rearing simulation apparatus on the communication network to the data on a virtual living thing representative of another category of the virtual living thing and sent back to said living thing data transmitting and receiving means G.

Claim 20. (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said data on a virtual living thing includes user identification data for identifying a user's apparatus,

table identification data for identifying a rearing stage table and an address of the rearing stage table for identifying the category of the virtual living thing.

Claim 21 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 16, wherein

said state parameter processing means A increases and decreases the "care" parameter representative of a degree of "care" with respect to the virtual living thing according to completeness of an operation by a player in response to an operation request from the virtual living thing, and calculates based on the "care" parameter a metamorphosis parameter influencing metamorphosis requirements to metamorphose the virtual living thing; and

rearing stage processing means D causes the virtual living thing to metamorphose to a next rearing stage based on the metamorphosis requirements depending on the metamorphosis parameter and a metamorphosis reference value set peculiarly to a category of a present rearing stage.

Claim 22 (new): A rearing simulation apparatus according to claim 16, wherein

rearing stage processing means D selects a veiled category out of a plurality of categories lodged in the next rearing stage to promote the virtual living thing to the next rearing stage, when state parameters meet requirements for a veiled rearing stage, the requirements for the veiled rearing stage being met less often in comparison with the metamorphosis requirements.